

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2007

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Levin and Skelton and Ranking Members McCain and Hunter:

As primary sponsors, we urge you to maintain the Senate provision establishing a bipartisan Commission on Wartime Contracting during upcoming conference negotiations on the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 1585). This provision was co-sponsored by 30 Senators and passed by the Senate (amendment #2999) with strong bipartisan support.

The Commission will study and investigate the effect of the federal government's growing reliance on civilian contractors to perform wartime functions. This urgently needed legislation would significantly increase transparency and accountability and generate important recommendations for systemic contracting problems, with the potential for saving taxpayers billions of dollars.

Current events underscore the importance of this legislation. The recent shooting that left at least 11 Iraqi civilians dead at the hands of a well-known private security contractor demonstrates the need to examine more closely the role that such companies are playing in U.S. military and reconstruction operations. The disclosure by the Department of Defense, before the House Committee on Armed Services, that contracts and programs valued at \$88 billion are being audited for financial irregularities reveals the potential magnitude of contracting mismanagement and abuse.

The establishment of the Commission on Wartime Contracting will create an independent entity to study and investigate the growing use of civilian contractors to perform wartime functions for logistics, security, reconstruction, and intelligence. It will assess the extent of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement of wartime contracts and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

Specifically, the Commission will work in consultation with the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), which currently oversees only reconstruction contracts in Iraq. The Senate provision will provide new authority for SIGIR to audit and investigate wartime contracts for logistics support and security functions, as well as reconstruction contracts, in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

These efforts are inspired by the work of the "Truman Committee," which investigated graft, defense contracts, and waste during World War II. Over the course of seven years, the original Truman Committee held 732 hearings and issued 51 reports, saving American taxpayers an estimated \$15 billion in 1943 dollars. The Senate voted to build on Senator Truman's legacy by developing lasting improvements to wartime contracting processes and procedures.

This measure received strong bipartisan support during debate on the Senate floor preceding the provision's adoption by voice vote. Additionally, this provision is strongly supported by several independent taxpayer watchdog groups, including the Project on Government Oversight, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Government Accountability Project, Common Cause, and OMBWatch.

We urge your support for the Senate provision and request that the language on the Commission on Wartime Contracting be retained in conference.


Sincerely,



Jim Webb



Amy Klobuchar



Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Benjamin L. Cardin



Bernard Sanders



Claire McCaskill



Sherrod Brown



Jon Tester



Sheldon Whitehouse